

Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC)

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

HEC members: Thaddeus Waterman (chair), Dawn Taft (staff), Janet Nackoney (notes), James Ball, James Wigley, Joseph Demarco, Danny Schaible (Council), Eduoard Haba (Council), Rayya Newman, Ian Fay, Malgorzata (Gosia) Bereziewicz

Guests: Jeff King

Notes

1. Welcome, Committee Roll Call, & Guest Orientation.
 - Introductions of new members Malgorzata and Ian: welcome!
2. Approval of [October meeting minutes](#): **Approved**
3. Public Comment Period
 - No public comments.
4. Decarbonization efforts of Metropolitan Washington Coalition of Governments
 - Jeff King, Metropolitan Washington Coalition of Governments (COG)
 - COG brings leaders together to develop solutions to the region's major challenges. COG prepares plans enabling the region to receive federal funding, provides members with research and data to inform decision-making, and offers a wide range of programs, including commuter services, cooperative purchasing, technical assistance and grants, and public outreach campaigns.
 - The COG has several [environment-related technical and policy committees and working groups](#). Related to our mission, COG helps municipalities develop their GHG inventories and climate action plans.
 - COG Board is working on three main environmental goals:
 - Helping municipalities to transition to 100% renewable energy
 - Helping with built environment sustainability improvements: helping buildings meet environmental code, promoting energy efficiency, increasing tree canopy cover.
 - Low emission vehicles and charging stations
 - COG open to other ideas for supporting env initiatives. Currently supporting PrinceGeorge's Co with urban sustainability issues, climate resilience, solar power, pro-pollinator activities. Role for HEC to help support here and ensure alignment with county initiatives. Another place for HEC to help out would be in helping Hyattsville reach a solar rooftop goal. Other areas needed that could be of interest to HEC:

- Reducing emissions from fleet vehicles
- Hyper-local air quality monitoring (would be through a partnership with Maryland Dept of Env.)
- Mapping and monitoring of tree canopy cover in Prince Georges Co.
- [EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants](#): competitive funding opportunity available \$2M-\$500M each. Proposals due next April. Maryland will likely apply– opportunity for Hyattsville to be part of a coalition to get some of this federal money for solar, EV, etc.
- Question (JD): How is COG work at the county level differentiated from that at a local municipality? - Advocating at both the county level and at Maryland legislative level. Many opportunities to partner with other municipalities to initiate and/or engage in activities that might support and enhance the goals that Prince George's Co. is trying to meet.
- Question (DS): Hyattsville is also working on a climate action plan and this is an area that needs more focus. Can you recommend a good model for a municipal climate action plan to look at? -COG has lended support to Rockville, Falls Church, Frederick. Also there is a [working group on this; kickoff meeting was yesterday](#).
- Question (MB): Can you direct us to a source that could give us a heads up on any other upcoming federal funding opportunities that could help Hyattsville? -There is a [COG Climate, Energy & Environment Policy Committee; next meeting tomorrow at 10am](#).
- HEC can reach out to Jeff ([email](#), phone: 202-962-3238) for more information about upcoming meetings on topics of interest and see how we can become more engaged if interested. Some of the committees are closed (application only) but others are open.

5. Highlights from Prince George's County Green Summit

- Debrief with organizing committee signaled that the event was considered a success. They have asked to hold next year's Green Summit event in Hyattsville again.
- Dawn's volunteers removed ivy from 25 trees, did a lot of mulching and trash collection.
- Attendance seemed low in general. There was a lack of advertising of the event in advance. Idea is to plan the event much sooner next year so that we have a whole year to prepare.
- RN: Would be good for next year to consider what the public can get out of the event– is there a particular topic that we could organize around? Perhaps each year there could be a central rotating main theme situated around an actionable objective. MB: Agree, would be good to tie this to

current initiatives that we really want to promote in Hyattsville. How can we inspire attendees to take certain actions?

- JN: The event had a good focus on county and state gov't environmental programs and initiatives. But there was a lack of civil society orgs and businesses that could round out the experience for attendees.

6. Invasive removal/goat update, future trainings, CM led invasive/vine removal initiative

- Update: Goats are now done and gone; held an education session for elementary school kids. Cool fact: goats have 4 chambers in their stomach; when they pass their waste, all of the seeds from invasives are fully broken down so they don't spread further. Also, goat hooves are helpful for burying the waste/mixing it into the ground soil as natural compost/fertilizer. We did two treatments of goats for the particular area of invasives (recommended); volunteers will remove existing invasive vines in the area that the goats did not take care of.
- Invasive removals: Potential additional training in December or Jan/Feb. Now that foliage is dropping, this is a good time to see the invasives. We have until May to meet the objectives of the grant. Goal is to save 1,000 trees that have been identified. So far, we have saved 300 trees. There are plans for the City to produce 3 short educational videos to demonstrate how ivy and other invasives are removed.
- Tree canopy preservation: One challenge reported by DW is that many residents want to remove their shade trees in favor of installing solar panels on roofs. Residents do not always understand the benefits of large trees for shade, stormwater retention and carbon sequestration.
 - JN: Interesting issue— [many resources looking at cost-benefit analysis of shade trees vs solar according to google](#); something that HEC could look into some more. Maryland doesn't actually provide as much incentive to go solar as DC does, so converting to solar is not as much of an obvious win in Maryland yet.
 - JD: Is this an issue that we could advocate for Hyattsville to get more involved in? Great potential for solar in industrial zone hotspots (empty lots, commercial rooftops etc.)

7. Announcements

- JB: [Hosting this net-zero energy coalition event on Thursday](#), all are welcome
- DW: Audubon ramping up for yard assessments in the spring. Terrific opportunity to learn about native plants and trees and how to design your yard to be friendly to native pollinators, birds and wildlife. Contact: audubonwildlifehabitat@gmail.com

- RN: Sharing the link to a [video from the Creative Thinking Workshop](#) - describes funding available for small businesses and nonprofits from Historic, CBTrust, and PEPCO– please share with others!

8. Adjournment.